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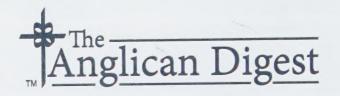


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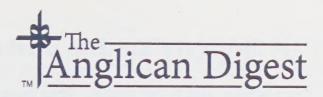
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For fifty-seven years, *The Anglican Digest* (TAD) has been the leading quarterly publication serving the Anglican Communion. From its inception, TAD's mission has been "to reflect the words and work of the faithful throughout the Anglican Communion." At a time when print editions are becoming an endangered species, TAD remains a familiar presence in the homes and offices of many Episcopalians.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Happy New Christian Year to our readers. Jesus came, Jesus comes, Jesus will come again. This is the Good News we anticipate in Advent and celebrate at Christmas. John Betjeman tells it well in *Christmas*:

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,
No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compareThat God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

As we prepare for Christmas, we have taken as the theme for this issue the Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, traditionally repeated daily until Christmas:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

— Catherine and Tony

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O ORIENS

MADELEINE L'ENGLE

O come, O come Emmanuel within this fragile vessel here to dwell.

O Child conceived by heaven's power give me thy strength: it is the hour.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high; like any baby at life you cry; for me, like any mother, birth was hard, O light of earth.
O come, O come, thou Lord of might, whose birth came hastily at night, born in a stable, in blood and pain is this the king who comes to reign?

O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
The stars will be thy diadem.
How can the infinite finite be?

Why choose, child,
to be born of me?
O come, thou key
of David, come,
Open the door
to my heart-home,
I cannot love thee as a king –
so fragile and
so small a thing.

O come, thou Day-spring from on high:
I saw the signs that marked the sky.
I heard the beat of angels' wings
I saw the shepherds and the kings.

O come, Desire of nations, be simply a human child to me.

Let me not weep that you are born.

The night is gone.

Now gleams the morn.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, God's Son, God's Self, with us to dwell.

HOPE

ROSEMARY GRIFFITHS, ORDINAND, St. Michael's College, Llandaff, Wales

Hope, like love, is one of those words in the English language that is used in modern parlance regularly but often without thinking. One might "hope" to go to a party or to the cinema. One might "hope" that it will not rain tomorrow. It is a word that rolls easily off the tongue and is not easily replaced with any other word. Yet, as G. K. Chesterton once suggested, we only ever know the true meaning of hope once we are hopeless.

At the heart of our faith is our fallenness and our hopelessness. At the heart of our faith is the realisation that on our own there is no hope, that our hope rests in God, our hope rests in the resurrection. And there is the rub: in our heart

of hearts we know that our hope rests in God our saviour, yet time and time again we distance ourselves, we make ourselves hopeless.

Henri Nouwen once said, "A waiting person is a patient person. The word patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us." Thus to be hopeful is to live in a state of patience and anticipation.

In the darkest of times it can feel very much as if we wait on nothingness, that our very being hopes and prays for an ending to a situation and our prayers are ineffective at best or at worst even futile. But our inability to be patient often prolongs our suffering. Paul in his letter to the Romans, articulates this sense of patience beautifully:

...endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Thus hope is not only bound up in patience and waiting. It is also an activity of endurance. It is not a passive act in which we sit helpless and forlorn, but an active moment, a moment in which great transformation takes place. It is in moments of our greatest hope that we experience our greatest grief. It is in these times that we realise that in our moments of need, we must place ourselves in what feels like the place of utmost vulnerability. Our truest moments of hope are the times that we must abandon all and place ourselves at the foot of the cross, in the embrace of God. To truly hope, in the Christian sense, is to abandon all sense of self and individualism True hope is to endure in the sure certainty that it is only in the Trinity that our hopes may be realised and our endurance rewarded.

At times this can be an almost impossible task. Like the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge's great poem we often view God like the sun imprisoned in a cage. At our most desperate times, we feel the absence of God. This is not because God is absent, but because of our inability to see beyond the slime and sludge of our personal circumstances, to see the hints that God is there, if we are able to move beyond our own personal hopes and to place our hope and trust in God. It is at these moments that we must pray.

St. Teresa of Avila's famous prayer is beautiful in its simplicity and is yet possibly one of the most difficult prayers one could pray. Encapsulated in it is the need to set aside

one's fears, to accept change and to hand all to God in the sure and certain hope that all happens in God's time:

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.

And yet, the lines that ring in our hearts and in our heads are often more likely to be akin to that of Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.

It is during the moments that God seems so distant that God is closest. There are times when we look up to heaven crying out to God and all we see is the back of a tapestry, the scraggy ends, all the untidiness of life. Yet we forget that on the other side of that tapestry is God, that God sees the finished product, God sees the intricate beauty of the silks of our lives and the knots in the thread. Like any great creative act, patience is rewarded by beauty. If we endure with patience and prayer, we are able to hope.

In those moments of true hope, we stand nearest to God. The action of hope is to abandon all to a force far greater than ourselves and to embrace inaction as well as practicalities. It is in the waiting, it is in the enduring, that we grow and transform the most. When we are able to truly live in God's time and give over all that we are to God in the sure and certain hope of God's enduring love, then we live in hope.

ADVENT AND The Prayer Book Exhortation

JAMES THAYER ADDISON

he Exhortation "to those who come to receive the Holy Comnion" reveals requirements for participation. There are here demanded no outward qualifications. The qualifications are inward—repentance, faith, and charity.

These are indispensable, not because God or man has ordained that they shall be indispensable, but because by the very nature of the case they cannot be otherwise. Sin unacknowledged and unrepented does not take us beyond the range of God's care but it automatically disqualifies us for the kind of intimate fellowship with him that participation in the Sacrament involves. God's presence does not depend on our faith but

our appropriation of what he seeks to give depends on the completeness of our trusting self-surrender. To approach God's altar with hatred, spite, or jealousy poisoning our souls is to encounter the perils of those who "eat and drink unworthily" and renders us at once immune to all those "innumerable benefits" which he has ordained "to our great and endless comfort."

The moral meaning of the Sacrament would be more widely understood if priests, often concerned with lesser rubrics, would more often obey the rubric at the close of the Liturgy. That rubric commands that the Communion shall not be administered to those between whom there is hatred and malice. To stress external requirements and to ignore the internal is characteristic of the Pharisee rather than the Lord whose supper we are sharing. Only when we "are in love and charity with

our neighbors" are we morally capable of being "filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us and we in him."

[The Exhortation may be found on pages 316-317 of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer; in the 1928 BCP, it is on pages 85-86.]

JUDGMENT

FREDERICK BUECHNER

We are all of us judged every day. We are judged by the face that looks back at us from the bathroom mirror. We are judged by the faces of the people we love, by the faces and lives of our children, and by our dreams. Each day finds us at the junction of many roads where we are judged as much by the roads we have not taken as by the roads we have. The New Testament proclaims

that at some unforeseeable time in the future God will ring down the final curtain on history. There will come a day on which all our days and all the judgments upon us and all our judgments upon each other will themselves be judged. The judge will be Christ. In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the one who loves us most fully.

Romantic love is blind to everything except what is lovable and lovely, but Christ's love sees us with terrible clarity and sees us whole. Christ's love so wishes our joy that it is ruthless against everything in us that diminishes our joy. The worst sentence Love can pass is that we behold the suffering which Love has endured for our sake, and that is also our acquittal. The justice and mercy of the judge are ultimately one.

THE SEASON THAT RUNS BACKWARDS

THE REV. FLEMING RUTLEDGE

Without doubt, Advent is the richest and most challenging season of the church year. At the same time, it is equally certain that Holy Week is the center of the Christian story. The peculiarly significant characteristic of Advent, however, is its capacity for positioning that central story on the brink of the future where human hopelessness is met by the promise of God's new day.

Because, you see, we are all under judgment, and the Christian community first of all. One of the most important theological developments in the Bible was the growing realization in Israel that God's judgment begins with God's own people. That is what Jesus was doing on the cross. He was taking upon himself the condemnation that properly belonged to us. Our case

before God was hopeless but Jesus' suffering effectively removed the curse from us (Galatians 3:10-14), enabling us to go forward with a miraculous new confidence ("I will give you a future and a hope" Jeremiah 29:11).

But—and this is the strength of the Advent season with its beginnings in judgment—our future and our hope are enacted in the midst of the struggles of this world. The Church does not approach Christmas in a rosy haze, awash with sentiment, as though the coming of the Christ Child were somehow the signal for the cessation of hostilities. On the contrary, Advent signifies that Christmas inaugurates an escalation of hostilities (Herod saw to that). The coming of God's Son ended by being an offense to everyone. The presence of God in our midst is not an altogether benign event. The Baby in the manger is the Judge of all the earth.

The surprising backwardness of Advent, therefore, is intended for our encouragement. It seems odd that we should begin preparing for Christmas with the news of the Great Last Day when "He comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead," but that is the intention of the season. Following the star of the Christ Child does not lead to glory and victory in this world. It may lead to a slaughter of the Innocents.

But Jesus Christ—crucified, risen, and coming again—will

be the last word. No intermediate word can have any ultimate power over us. "Who can bring any charge against God's elect? ... Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or sword? ... It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" (Romans 8:33-35). Thus the news of judgment ultimately becomes the news of acquittal and new life. This is the news without which there can be no Merry Christmas; and because it does not retreat in the face of apparent hopelessness, it is in truth the merriest news of all.

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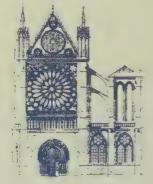
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ADVENT'S CALL

(From the Advent A.D. 1986 Issue of TAD)

bsession with relevancy and the contemporary for its own sake is little short of blasphemous, for it rapidly dupes us into believing that the voice of the age is all there is to say, and that the latest word is the last word.

Advent drives a steam roller through such a simplistic view of history. It refuses to believe either that the latest is the best, or on the other hand that durability constitutes respectability. Equally it rejects the view that the mere passage of time constitutes progress and that we are necessarily wiser than earlier ages. In a word, it refuses to let us settle for either the traditional or the trendy.

Our Advent teaching therefore will recall God's people to play their best role in history by always encouraging the world to set its sights beyond history. At the same time it will point perhaps to John the Baptist, and remind leaders of the Church that popularity has seldom been the measure of faithfulness.

So let judgment begin with the household of faith! For we are not called upon to rant and rage against a bewildered world. Rather we are summoned to put our own house in order first. As the tension between the traditional and the trendy mounts, the "faithful servant" of the Advent parables seeks neither compromise nor extremes, but rather a new obedience and an ever finer tuning to the voice of the Bridegroom. So away with parties, issues, and slogans in today's Church. For it is all too easy to prefer selective deafness to obedient attention, speculation to revelation, and a manmade religion to a God-given faith.

Yet where there is obedience there is a new chemistry. For obedience arrests us and compels us to rise from the armchair posture of those endless discussions and committees. It engages our feet and our hands and enlists us not to sit on anything, but rather to march with Somebody.

For a Church of obedient disciples out on the road will come to know his will by doing it, and will measure orthodoxy more by the dust on its feet than by the dust on its archives. It will strain its ear to the word of God rather than to the approving words of men. Only so can the Church hope to be even within earshot, when the cry goes out: "the Bridegroom comes." Only then will it be where it is all really happening (truly relevant) and alert to respond effectively to the Advent call.

EYES OF The blind

The Rev. Sydney Woodd-Cahusac

dvent is brilliantly full of the imagery of light versus darkness, sight versus blindness. The collect for the First Sunday of Advent, echoing Romans, bids us "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now ..."

If we had no idea who supplies that light, the readings for the Third Sunday of Advent make it increasingly clear: Isaiah promises that the eyes of the blind shall be opened. So does that day's Psalm. And when John the Baptist, so Matthew tells us, sends to Jesus to ask, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Christ tells the messenger, "Go and tell John what you heard and see; the blind receive their sight."

For we humans are blind in utter darkness, literally as far as our physical sense of sight goes, figuratively in our spiritual and moral senses. Human beings have for ages equated darkness with evil and trouble and were incapable of seeing how to defend themselves against either. We desperately need the Light to see our way. So Scripture, in a hundred ways and variations, many exquisitely poetic, repeats to us over and over that the Light we need is the Christ, and we relive the time in our history when this was but a promise, and we read again and again the stories by those who foretold him

And why do we still find the story fascinating, when we have, so to speak, peeked at the back of the book and know the ending? Although we now celebrate the anticipation, we know that he was born. He did live amongst us, full of grace and truth. He did minister.

He did die. He did rise again. Perhaps we find this story reassuring in the way children find an oft-told story reassuring.

There is great reassurance in knowing this particular ending. Darkness, you see, keeps recurring as day turns into night each twenty-four hours: the works of darkness continue to afflict us, and furthermore we sometimes cause night to fall in our own and other lives. in ways greater or smaller. So we need to hear, over and over, that the armor of light, put on, will help us cast away those works of darkness, whatever their source. And we need to hear, yet again, that his life was the light of our lives, and that though the darkness may seem to come with terrifying frequency, there is, even more persistently, the Light. Sensing it and reaching toward it, our blinded eyes are opened over and over again: the blind receive their sight.

DECEMBER 1874 LETTER FROM JOHN RUSKIN

It is today the second Sunday in Advent, and all over England, about the time that I write these words, full congregations will be for the second time saying Amen to the opening collect of the Christian year.

I wonder how many individuals of the enlightened public understand a single word of its first clause:

"Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life."

How many of them, may it be supposed, have any clear knowledge of what grace is, or of what the works of darkness are which they hope to have grace to cast away; or will feel

themselves, in the coming year, armed with any more luminous mail than their customary coats and gowns, hosen and hats? Or again, when they are told to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians, 5:11), what fellowship do they recognize themselves to have guiltily formed; and whom, or what, will they feel now called upon to reprove?

In [the last letter], I showed you how the works of darkness were unfruitful—the precise reverse of the fruitful, or creative, works of Light—but why in this collect, which you pray over and over again all Advent, do you ask for "armour" instead of industry? You take your coat off to work in your own gardens; why must you put a coat of mail on, when you are to work in the Garden of God?

Well; because the earthworms in it are big—and have teeth

and claws, and venomous tongues. So that the first question for you is indeed, not whether you have a mind to work in it—many a coward has that—but whether you have courage to stand in it, and armour proved enough to stand in.

Suppose you let the consenting bystander who took care of the coats taken off to do that piece of work on St. Stephen, explain to you the pieces out of St. Michael's armoury needful to the husbandman ... of God's garden.

"Stand therefore; having your loins girt about with Truth."

That means, that the strength of your backbone depends on your meaning to do true battle.

"And having on the breastplate of Justice."

That means, there are to be no partialities in your heart, of

anger or pity—but you must only in justice kill, and only in justice keep alive.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of Peace."

That means, that where your foot pauses, moves, or enters, there shall be peace; and where you can only shake the dust of it on the threshold, mourning.

"Above all, take the shield of Faith."

Of fidelity or obedience to your captain, showing his bearings, argent, a cross gules; your safety, and all the army's, being first in the obedience of faith: and all casting of spears vain against such guarded phalanx.

"And take the helmet of Salvation."

Elsewhere, the *hope* of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8), that being the defence of your intellect against base and sad thoughts, as the shield of fidelity is the defence of your heart against burning and consuming passions.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:14-17).

That being your weapon of war, your power of action, whether with sword or ploughshare; according to the saying of St. John of the young soldiers of Christ, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you" (1 John 2:14). The Word by which the heavens were of old: and which, being once only Breath, became in man Flesh, "quickening it by the spirit" into the life which is, and is to come; and enabling it for all the works nobly done by the quick, and following the dead.

And now, finish your Advent collect, and eat your Christmas fare, and drink your Christmas wine, thankfully: and with understanding that if the supper is holy which shows your Lord's death till He come, the dinner is also holy which shows His life; and if you would think it wrong at any time to go to your own baby's cradle side, drunk, do not show your gladness by Christ's cradle in that manner; but eat your meat, and carol your carol in pure gladness and singleness of heart; and so gird up your loins with truth, that, in the year to come, you may do such work as Christ can praise, whether He call you to judgment from the quick or dead; so that among your Christmas carols there may never any more be wanting the joyfullest:

O sing unto the Lord a new song:

Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

Say among the heathen that the Lord is King: The world also shall be stablished that it shall not be moved Let the heavens rejoice, And let the earth be glad; Let the sea shout. and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the Lord: For He cometh, for He cometh to JUDGE THE EARTH: HE SHALL JUDGE THE WORLD WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND THE PEOPLE WITH HIS TRUTH. (Psalm 96:10-13)

NEGLECTED LOVE

THE REV. WILLIAM H. RALSTON

Reading Allan Bloom's book, The Closing of the American Mind, produces the opposite effect of its melancholy title and basic argument. It opens the mind to a consideration of just what are the basic components of our present intellectual sloth, and how by varying stages we got where we are. I think the book is a bit off-center, but anyone who considers Plato's Republic the basic work on education and society and Neitzche's philosophy the prophetic description of our mind (or loss of mind) at the end of the modern world has my attention in short order.

All this reminds me that our intellectual state is not only deplorable, but sinful. We are told by Jesus, and throughout the Bible, to love the Lord our God with all our *mind*. "Blessed is the man whose mind

(imagination) is fixed (stayed) on Thee." Most people evidently do not believe this or even make a minimal effort to obey it. Only think of the idle notions, the complacent vanities, that pass themselves off as ideas: the self-satisfactions of avoiding hard thinking; the sheer drift and dream of our minds; the squalor of our house of reason; the complacent idols of our imaginations. It is a litany of abuse and neglect of the very faculty God gave us to distinguish us from his other creatures. It can be put very simply. We name the other creatures. They do not name us.

We need to recall that our minds fell from grace along with our wills and hearts, and therefore are mired in sin. But while we usually try to make some efforts about a crooked heart and a twisted will, not many of us make a resolute act of contrition about an atrophied mind.

We are all built in certain ways, and temperament has a lot to do with it. If I may offer myself as an example, I confess that I have a desperate struggle with a most problematic heart. I have an uncertain disposition, a curst I constantly battle to contain, often with small success. My will is also subject to inanition and defeat-actions which turn awry and "lose the name of action"; resolutions formed on a grand scale and abandoned at the meanest prod of pleasure. I have lived my fifty-odd years with a difficult heart and a vacillating will.

I have known, however, the neglected love. For some reason or other I have been given to love God with my mind. That certainly isn't everything, but it's something. It does not excuse failures of the will and dilapidations of the heart, but it's my comfort in the dead of night. I don't know why grace and redemp-

tion work more successfully on one of our faculties rather than on the whole person, but that's the way it is.

We all know some very good-hearted people, eminently well-intentioned in ways quite beyond us, but without a brain in their heads or any focus to their benignity. We also know some very dedicated people whose wills and energies are admirably directed toward admirable goals. They can also be quite blind to any activity not their own and heartless to those who get in their way.

This particular article, however, is about the junk-food of our minds. Christianity is not necessarily complex and difficult. That would make it more or less an intellectual problem. Not so. Christianity is instead (as Baron von Hügel used to say) simple and profound. It is more like a mystery than a problem.

This does not mean it is easily understood nor of ready comprehension. Like a great work of art or the panorama of the natural world, it must be pondered, wondered at, contemplated, and loved-by the mind! People who do not consider it their business to rise to the intellectual challenge of Jesus are guilty of a most fateful reduction of his Gospel. Being generally well-disposed or fairly active in acceptable community and ecclesiastical projects does not compensate for dissipation of "the intellectual love of God" (as old Spinoza put it).

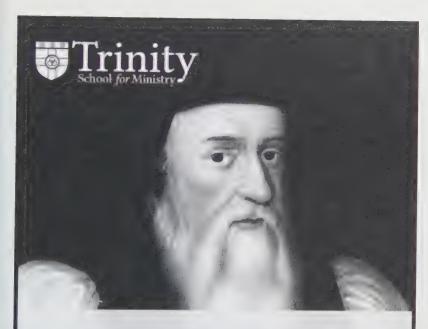
Jesus is a perpetual challenge to, just as he is a perpetual refreshment for, our minds. Think how often the word "truth" rings through St. John's Gospel. No words (and how comparatively few those words are) have ever been considered as minutely, as closely, as continuously, since they were spoken as

have the words of Jesus. They are inexhaustible food for the mind. When the disciples said "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life", we are in the presence of a phenomenon that raises human reason to the point of incandescence: "I am the light of the world." Anyone who imagines—or, rather, will not or cannot imagine—that such things do not call out to the deepest levels of our minds is violating a primary condition of his spiritual health.

For heaven's sake (literally!), do not excuse yourself with "It's too difficult for me", "It's over my head", and relax into the easy formulas. "It does not matter what you believe, as long as you're sincere." There is not a word of truth in that phrase. "I never discuss religion, because it's all just how you feel about it." This is a disgusting trivialization of God, as if he were nothing more than the other end of our

emotions. I remember the effusions of a Kentucky mountain preacher. He was all worked up, shouting into the microphone: "Oh! Oh! I don't know what it is I feel, but, Oh! Oh!, how I feel it!"

That just won't do. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind. We must respond to this. It is not an option for any Christian to not attempt it. Paul Elmer More put it perfectly: "religion is not a fraction of life, not merely morality touched with emotion... but the whole of life and the concern of all our faculties; and it would be a poor thing if it did not take into itself and remold the reason and the higher imagination."



Confessing the Faith

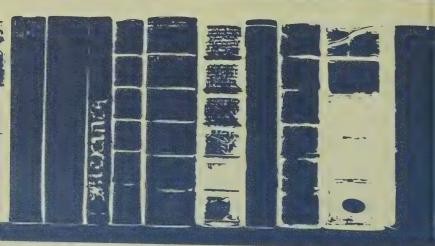
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Stanley Porter tackles a variety of important and often highly



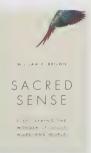
contentious topics within the Gospel of John as a means of defining and capturing the distinctive Johannine voice. Subjects discussed include John in relation to competing Gospels, the public proclamation of Jesus in John, the sources of John's Gospel, John's prologue, the "I Am" sayings, the notion of truth, the Passover theme, and the ending of the book. Each chapter puts forward new and insightful proposals regarding

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es wonder. He explores reading strategies and offers fresh readings of seventeen Old and New Testament passages, identifying what he finds most central and evocative in the unfolding biblical drama. The Bible invites its readers to linger in wide-eyed wonder, Brown says — and his *Sacred Sense* shows readers how to do just that.

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Grace Mazza Urbanski, director of Children's Ministry for the Apostleship of Prayer, gives parents practical advice on how to help children find opportunities to pray throughout the day. Using warmth, humor, and passion, she draws on personal experience to show how families are brought closer together through deeper contact with God. There are opportunities for children

to pray everywhere—when a friend gets hurt on the playground, before a test in the classroom, and even as they hear ambulance sirens while riding in the car with mom or dad—not just at meals and bedtime. *Pray with Me* identifies seven ways that parents can help deepen their child's relationship with God by using everyday life as a trigger for prayer and shows how spontaneous prayer, traditional prayers you know by heart, scripture, song, silence, and reflection help families draw closer to God and each other.

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In this volume of rich pastoral meditations, Martin Copenhaver offers rare insight into the myriad ways we try to live the Christian life, showing us that there is indeed "room to grow" in Christ and into the Christian faith. Moving seamlessly from the gently humorous to the thoughtfully serious, these reflections will renew and inspire Christians in their daily walk.

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FOR CHILDREN

I'M RIGHT HERE by Constance Ørbeck-Nilssen, Illustrated by Akin Duzakin

"Are you ever afraid?" William asks his grandmother. But her answer isn't what he expects. His grandma isn't afraid of big dogs or thunder and lightning like William is. Instead, she's afraid that she won't see the flowers bloom next spring. She's afraid that

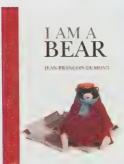


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she'll miss the magpie building its nest. Most of all, she's afraid of losing the things she loves—especially William. But then it's William's turn to surprise her with his response. With soft, inviting artwork, this reassuring story contains a stirring message about the power and constancy of love. Ages 4-8.

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AN ADVENT SERMON

Progessor Basil George Mitchell, D.D.

[Emeritus Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, Fellow of the British Academy, Formerly Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in the University of Oxford]

n the media the season of Advent is called "the I run-up to Christmas" and even in the Church we rarely give much thought to it. But if we do think about it, it seems to play strange tricks with time. We all know it as the season when we look forward to the birth of Jesus. It heralds the approach to Christmas. But, as is clear from our Advent hymns, we also look forward to the Second Coming of Christ. So we sing "O come, O come, Emmanuel" and we also sing "Lo! he comes with clouds descending."

When we talk of "looking forward to the birth of Jesus," we

know that this is only a manner of speaking. The birth of Jesus took place some two thousand years ago and what we now look forward to is Christmas, our annual celebration of that event. Older English could express this distinction better than modern English, as in the Collect for Christmas day itself: "Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin..." When, however, we look forward to the Second Coming we are in our own present time gazing to an unknown future.

The Collect for Advent brings out this play with time in a most startling way. Unlike most of the collects, which come down from the medieval church, the Collect for Advent was composed by Cranmer himself when he was compiling The Book of Common Prayer. Listen to it again:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, Amen'

"Give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, NOW..." Suddenly it is not the historical past or the unknown future that is brought before our minds, but the immediate present—it is NOW that we are to cast away the works of darkness.

But then, as the collect goes on, this present moment is extended back in time: "now in the time of this mortal life'— for each of us the whole of our life—every moment of it—is the time to cast away the works of darkness. And then, as the collect continues, it takes us still further back in time, back in history to the earthly life of Christ: "now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility."

At Advent we look back to the birth of Christ and his ministry on earth; we look forward to our yearly celebration of his birth at Christmas; and we look still further forward to his coming again, when he will judge the living and the dead. But to put it just like that is to forget that emphatic NOW. If on Advent Sunday all we do is to look back to Christ's earthly life and forward to his coming again, our present life seems to occupy a sort of interval when nothing much is going on. Something decisive happened in history; something decisive will happen

beyond history, but nothing decisive happens now. Christ came to visit us two thousand years ago and, we believe, will come again, although we cannot picture what that will be like—or rather we can picture it as Charles Wesley does in his marvellous hymn "Lo! he comes with clouds descending," but we know, as Wesley surely knew, that the reality will far transcend our picture of it. But meanwhile we are, it seems, left with nothing but remembrance and anticipation, as if in the long interval between the two Christ was altogether absent.

Cranmer, in his prayer, twice warns us against this; first in that emphasis NOW, and then, at the close of the collect, when we pray that "we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth..."

As you will have noticed, when Cranmer began his col-

lect "give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light" he was drawing upon the words of St. Paul in our reading:

Now it is high time to wake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light.

There is an enormous sense of urgency in this, which is well brought out in the New English Bible translation of this passage: "In all this remember how critical the moment is. It is time for you to wake out of sleep." The Authorized version conveys this too with its "Now it is high time to wake out of sleep." The moment is critical because it depends on our decision now. Whether Christ is received into our hearts and whether his love is shown in our lives. The collect says:

... <u>now</u> in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, we are to think not only of his life and death in Palestine but also of the risen life which he shares <u>now</u> with all who will receive him.

We find this double emphasis in many of our Christmas hymns. For example the writer of "O little town of Bethlehem" takes the Christmas story and applies it to our present experience:

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human
hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive
him still
The dear Christ enters in.

"No ear may hear his coming." It need not be a dramatic incident like St. Paul's encoun-

ter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus. In the Gospel for today, the parable of the sheep and the goats, the righteous, who are to inherit eternal life, are unaware that Christ has visited them and that they have received him:

"Lord when saw we thee anhungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison and came unto thee?" And the King answered them "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

This double emphasis in the Christian Gospel is, then, the central message of Advent. On the one hand there is the story of our redemption set in the past, and a story of judgment and forgiveness to be realized in the future; and, on the other hand, a call to accept Christ

into our hearts and lives here and now. But, once we have recognized this two-fold pattern, we shall find it on every Sunday of the year, whenever we celebrate the Eucharist or Holy Communion.

The Eucharist is an act of remembrance and of anticipation: "and in his Holy Gospel command us to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death until his coming again." We are looking back in time and looking forward in time to consummation beyond time. We are thus made aware week by week of our place in a great cosmic drama of redemption which gives meaning to every moment of our lives. But we also "feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving" and, in the Prayer of Humble Access, we pray that "we may so eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ and drink his blood that . . . we may evermore dwell in him and he in us."

Unless we allow Christ to enter into our hearts here and now—to visit us in great humility—the story of redemption fails to come alive for us, the work of redemption is not fulfilled in us.

All this, in a miracle of compression, is set before us in the Collect for Advent, with which I will end as I began:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and for ever, Amen.

CELEBRATING ADVENT WITH Young Children

any people are eager to find ways of explaining Advent to their young children, grand-children, and godchildren, teaching them what it means, and thereby helping them to learn that Christmas is not about finding a nice, big pile of presents under the tree. We thought we would try to offer a few suggestions.

Create an Advent Wreath. For this, you will need ruler, a permanent marker, a large piece of scrap paper (e.g., a page from a newspaper), four candles (three purple, one pink), candle cups (individual plastic cups with a spike on the bottom) or a drill bit the size of your candles, a Styrofoam ring, and some greenery to wrap around the ring. (The Styrofoam ring and candle cups should be avail-

able at craft stores or florist shops.) Use the ruler to draw two perpendicular lines, center the Styrofoam ring on the lines, mark the spots for each candle, then either insert your candle cups or drill holes at each spot. Insert the candles, then wrap greenery around the ring. Each evening, the family can light the appropriate number of candles and say Evening Prayer or Compline together (Compline is shorter, if you are pressed for time. In addition, we have found it to be a wonderful way to end the day; it might make for a prayerful and calming transition from playtime to bedtime).

When it comes to saying the Daily Office, whether during Advent or not, we like St. Bede's Breviary (stbedeproductions.com/bre viary/). Among the many options available, it allows you to choose between Morning, Noonday, and Evening

Prayer, or Compline; Rite I or Rite II; Coverdale Psalter or 1979 BCP Psalter; include additions such as hymns. It also allows you to set your preferences so that you don't have to deal with making each choice each day.

Create an Advent Calendar. There are myriad ways to do this—use felt and glue (or hot glue, or needle and thread), or construction paper and glue or a stapler, to create either pockets or flaps; and then, for each day on the calendar, have the kids draw a picture or prayer to be uncovered, or make an ornament (e.g., by decorating clothes pins, drawing or cutting something out of paper) to add to the Christmas tree, or come up with a prayer to recite or a goal or a good deed to perform.

Make Wrapping Paper, which you will then use to wrap Christmas presents. For this, you need a roll of white or

brown plain paper (available at craft stores, etc.), markers, colored pencils, or crayons, and perhaps colored construction paper, scissors, and glue sticks. Begin by discussing the meaning and purpose of Advent (e.g., it is a time for us to prepare for Jesus' birth) and the ways we mark the season (e.g., making Advent wreaths), then ask them to decorate the paper-perhaps with wreaths and candles, or drawings of a manger scene, angels, shepherds, sheep, Mary and Jesus traveling and asking for shelter, etc.

Make a Crêche. There are multiple ways to do this, too: construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, and crayons, colored pencils, or markers; felt and glue (or hot glue), trims, beads, cotton balls, etc.; clothes pegs and markers, and perhaps also fabric and glue; or modeling clay (available from craft stores) or Play-Doh (either made at home, or

the real thing). Have the children make all of the characters—Joseph, Mary, Jesus, the Angel Gabriel, shepherds, the three Magi—as well as various barnyard animals—cows, sheep, donkeys, horses, etc.—and don't forget the star! Each day during Advent, add another piece to the crèche, beginning with the animals and continuing until, on Christmas Eve, you add Jesus. And, of course, add the Magi on Epiphany.

THE ANSWER OF CHRISTMAS

THE MOST REV. LORD MICHAEL RAMSEY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (1961-1974)

It is because we believe that God has an answer to man's predicament, the answer of the Word-made-flesh at Bethlehem, that we have hope, and, having hope, are rejoicing once again at Christmas. Christians for whom this hope is a reality have been able to rejoice even when they have been in the world's darkest places. It was in prison in Rome, with the prospect of death awaiting him, that St. Paul wrote, "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice... In nothing be anxious, the Lord is at hand."

The proof of our Christian hope is the existence of men and women who have lived by it and have radiated its joy even in dark and heartbreaking circumstances. Each of us will have known such men and women, and it is in them that Christmas is seen to be alive.

The Child born on this day is set for the rising and falling of many, and when the sword of Bethlehem pierces our own souls, may it find us on the side of those who know the costly secret of Christmas joy.

HEAVEN AND HELL

THE REV. JOHN ANDREW

remember a remark dropped by Austin Farrer in one of his sermons: "The breaking of the heart is the opening of Heaven." Heaven opens to a heart no longer sure of its righteousness. God's companionship and the vision of his face is youchsafed to the soul with some true self-knowledge. Heaven is linked with the clearness of view that penitence brings. Heaven is when God has wiped away all the tears from the eyes of a sorrowful soul, sorry not for itself but because of itself, its falsities, its cheap sense of values, its selfish scale of priorities.

Heaven and the broken heart:

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou shalt not despise."

Hell and the blind heart. The Litany begins: "From all blindness of heart, from

pride, vainglory and hypocrisy, from envy, hatred, and malice, and from all uncharitableness." Hell is not arrived at by mistake; blindness is not a condition but rather a blinkering, a determined narrowing of view of the eyes of the soul. It is a planned journey, undeterred and undistracted by the soul preoccupied with self. It requires strength of character to achieve hell The soul hell-bent is a model of single-mindedness. Its heart is blindly hostile to all matters of the spirit, matters that it would only determine as obstacles in its path. It rides roughshod over the tender flowers of spiritual growth that the life of somebody else may hopefully have planted in its way. It wants achievement of its aims, its own end. Its aims and ends are itself; itself at all costs. And the costs are these: all means are employed to that one end. There is for the soul hell-bent no questioning of means. All is fair in

love and war, we are told, and if you are, at one and the same time, so totally wrapped up in love with yourself and at war with anything outside yourself that threatens to distract you from your self-absorption, then all is fair for you to continue your quest. Offers of love go unnoticed, unrecognized, or are rejected; calls for pity go unheeded. There is no intention to commit yourself to anybody or anything outside the plan with yourself at its center.

Hell is harder to get to than Heaven. This is hard work—to get to hell needs all your resources. You can only, in fact, get there by your own efforts. You achieve hell because, beyond all else, you want it for yourself although you insist on confusing it with Heaven. When you have achieved it, when you have got yourself, what do you have? Nothing. The real thing, reality, comes from seeing and acclaiming

truth for what it is in whatever way it discloses itself and there is a deep falsity in the essence of selfishness.

This illustration may shock you. It isn't meant to, and forgive it if it does. I was talking with somebody who had a passion for sleeping between wrong pairs of sheets. It was the itch, the unquenchable desire of his young life. Most of his leisure time was spent seeking it. Much of his working time was spent on planning a new affair or planning his extrication from it. He told me he knew what hell was like. He had a taste of it. Driven to it, constantly getting exactly what he wanted more than anything else, constantly bored with it as soon as he had got it, despair began to grow around his determination to express himself selfishly. This young man's hell began from his egocentricity that showed itself in this way and took its grip upon his life.

He thought he was loving this way of expressing himself; he realized he was bored by it, and the hell for him was the endless process of being driven into something that had lost all sweetness for him and became instead a stinking burden of sour encounter.

Note the sense of loss he experienced. The Bible talks of hell in terms like this. We cannot escape the confrontation of Christ's own warning of this terrifying sense of loss; having shut everything and everybody out of our lives including himself, there is a real awareness we are made to feel of being excluded. And it can come about through your own undeviating, single-minded hard work. True it is that to get to hell you need to pit all your resources. You can only, in fact, get there by your own efforts. You have to use everything in your character to combat the goodness of others, because that goodnessthat truth in action—impedes you. We can use a splendid expression for a soul hell-bent: "You're on your own." Which is more than can be said about getting into Heaven.

Heaven is all God's initiative. To achieve Heaven requires none of your resources, for none are of any use, except a will to recognize God's love and to return it with the love of your free heart.

"Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling ..."

It is God and God alone through Christ in the Holy Spirit who calls you to himself, who can bring you to himself—which is what Heaven is. There is no race to Heaven in which there is a possibility that you may win or lose the leadership against your fellow contestants. There is no rivalry—don't you remember Christ's answer to the pushy mother of James and John who had seen Heav-

CONNECTING

en in those terms?
"He calls you one and calls you
all to gain His everlasting hall

. . .

Thus, Heaven is all God's initiative and also a prize in the sense that there is the prize of himself for everyone who comes to him in love. He invites. He judges as he invites. His invitation is his judgment.

He forgives as he judges. His judgment is his forgiveness. He strengthens as he forgives. His forgiveness is his strengthening. For Heaven you have to be man-handled by Christ, the heart's bone-hard pride broken and the soul reset

"The breaking of the heart is the opening of Heaven."

THE LITURGY

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

YES, if the intensities of hope and fear
Attract us still, and passionate exercise
Of lofty thoughts, the way before us lies
Distinct with signs, through which in set career,
As through a zodiac, moves the ritual year
Of England's Church; stupendous mysteries!
Which whoso travels in her bosom eyes,
As he approaches them, with solemn cheer.
Upon that circle traced from sacred story
We only dare to cast a transient glance,
Trusting in hope that Others may advance
With mind intent upon the King of Glory,
From his mild advent till his countenance
Shall dissipate the seas and mountains hoary.

ADVENT

Taken from the Catechetical Instruction by Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop, A.D. 444

His first coming was to fulfill his plan of love, to teach men by gentle persuasion. Malachi, the prophet, speaks of the two comings, "And the Lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple"; that is one coming.

Again he says of another coming, "Look, the Lord almighty will come, and who will endure the day of his entry, or will stand in his sight? Because he comes like a refiner's fire, a fuller's herb, and he will sit refining and cleansing."

These two comings are also referred to by Paul in writing to Titus, "The grace of God the Savior has appeared to all men, instructing us to put aside impiety and worldly desires and live temperately, uprightly, and religiously in this present age, waiting for the joyful hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Our Lord Jesus Christ will therefore come from heaven. He will come at the end of the world, in glory, at the last day. For there will be an end to this world, and the created world will be made new.

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THE TENSES OF ADVENT

THE REV. THEODORE GRACIA

By custom, tradition, liturgical preference, and nostalgia, the season of Advent pulls us into the past. Our scriptural lessons are, by their very essence, ancient history. In our mind's eye the personalization of the characters of Advent are clothed in the garb of "biblical times." The mode of transportation of the Holy Family is a slow-stepping donkey. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Christ, is a quaint, old-fashioned character, portraying an even older tradition than the New Testament. Finally, there is the goal of our past-tensed Advent, the sleepy, backwater town, lowing cattle and waiting manger, Bethlehem

There is the Advent of the future. This is the theological and eschatological Advent referred to in the Creed which we recite in the Eucharist: "He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose Kingdom shall have no end." Just to remind us that this "second coming" of Jesus is not merely a vague theological proposition there is the Lord's Prayer—"thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What is the second coming? The Catechism calls this future Advent the "Christian Hope" or to "live with confidence in the newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of Christ in glory, and the completion of God's purpose for the world."

Both the past and future tenses of Advent are valid and legitimate aspects of this sacred season, yet either one without the balancing reality of the other is a pious fraud. Religion that lives in either the past or the future is a denial of God to whom all time

is eternally present. To stress only the past tense of religious truth is to reduce the Christian revelation to a fairy tale. To emphasize only the future is to cheat humanity of the redemption already achieved in the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus who lives through his sacramental body, the Church.

Advent is a sacrament of chronology. In the days and years of our own lives God is calling us to travel toward a Bethlehem; to make a journey toward the completion of God's purpose for our life. Thus the faith that we strive to live in Advent is the balancing of past and future in the cares and joys of the present. As we make a sentimental journey through Christmas past, let us remember the harshness of the present. As we think of placid manger scenes and the serenity of angel choirs singing earthward—remember the terrorism, the car

bombs, and the anguish of those without hope; of children born third-generation refugees. This is the other side of Bethlehem in whose dark streets stalks peril side by side with the light of light. As we prepare for a Christmas of gift-giving and feasting, we should remember those for whom life is a perpetual fast of enforced privation, humiliation, and total abstinence from justice, freedom, security, and the most elemental forms of human dignity.

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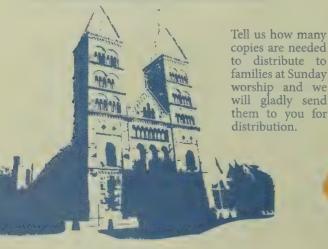
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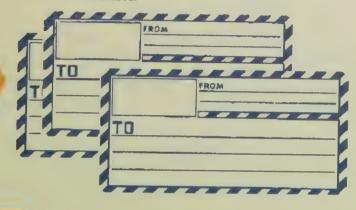
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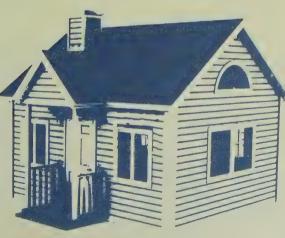
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THE BALLAD OF THE VIRGIN AND THE WISE MEN

THE REV. JANET MORGAN

What will you wrap the baby in Mary, Lady Mary? I have wrapped him in my silken veil and covered him with a white lamb's skin My firstling.

O wrap him well against his need Mary, Lady Mary! For cold and hatred will prevail and his cloak will fall to a soldier's

greed Mary, Lady!

Where is the baby lying, say Mary, Lady Mary? He lies within a manger bed; His pillow is the oxen's hay; My dearling.

O soft be his repose and deep Mary, Lady Mary! For hard the path that he must tread And bitter fasting will he keep Mary, Lady!

His fast shall be for our plenty.

See how the babe doth smile and play Mary, Lady Mary! He smiles because he does not know how dark the sun will be one day, My youngling.

O let him smile upon us here Mary, Lady Mary!

For death will bring his body low and sin will hold a nail and spear, Mary Lady!

But our sin dies when he shall rise.

The babe is sleeping sweet and still Mary, Lady Mary! Into our world the Word is born and flesh become the Father's will, my Lordling!

But shall he hang upon the tree Mary, Lady Mary?

His coronet the cruel thorn?

If love be God, how can this be, Mary Lady!

Love shall live while men forgive.

CAST AWAY THE WORKS OF DARKNESS

THE REV. SCOTT GUNN [From a meditation offered for an Advent quiet day at St. Stephen's, Providence, RI]

The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

This is sometimes known as the Advent collect, and until our current prayer book, was to be used daily through Advent. Some of us still use it devotionally each day or even in corporate worship through the season. This is fitting, because in so many ways, this collect perfectly captures Advent—both our recollection of the First Advent of Christ in humility and our hope for the Second Advent of Christ in glory.

The lovely cadences we pray in this collect are more or less Cranmer's work. Composed for the 1549 prayer book, the collect has been revised several times in subsequent centuries. But our current version is close to the original. Cranmer obviously borrowed from the Letter to the Romans. In the 8th chapter, beginning at the 11th verse, we read:

You know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

But aside from the history and the biblical sources, let us simply appreciate this prayer for its beautiful rhythms, deep resonance, and rich theology.

As we draw closer to the depths of winter, with its ever-shorter days, the language of darkness and light evokes reality and hope. Who among us does not long not only for literal brightness, but for the hope of Christ's light in a world that sometimes seems hopelessly shrouded in gloom.

We begin by asking for grace, for God's gift, that we might "cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light." We are not just ignoring evil nor merely turning away from it. To cast something away means to take it, to seize it, and to hurl it. To cast something away, we have to grab it and reject it. It requires a certain fierceness. Our only hope of accomplishing this is indeed by God's grace.

Jesus told his disciples to "be not afraid"—about as much as he said anything to them. To be seduced by fear is not new to our time, though perhaps our culture is uniquely equipped to create a deafening cacophony of fear-inducing noise. Might this "armor of light" help us to reject captivity to fear, surely one of the great works of darkness? I think so.

Along with the arresting contrast between "works of dar-

ness" and "armor of light," the collect brings to mind the contrasting reality of the First Advent and Second Advent. We are reminded of Christ's visit in "great humility" and we look ahead to Christ's coming in "glorious majesty." We remember God among us, Emmanuel, in this "mortal life" and we pray for hope that we will attain "life immortal." So much is packed into the ninety words of our prayer!

Fundamentally, though there are elements that call us to the end of days, I read this prayer as a plea for strength, for God's grace, in this earthly pilgrimage. Advent is a microcosm of a much larger reality in which we must daily recall the Incarnation of God-among-us while looking ahead to the day we will all meet Jesus Christ in glory. This is not an individualistic prayer, a prayer for me. It is rather for us, for the church. It is a reminder that we are all

pilgrims, we are all walking through darkness into light.

Light is such a powerful image for us because light itself is so extraordinary. If we were to enter the nave in the thick of night, and if we could cut the power and the city lights all around the church to get real darkness, and if we then waited in darkness and in silence, we could, if we chose, experience an extraordinary thing. A single candle could illumine the vastness of this church. We might have to be near the candle to read by its light, but its light would nevertheless penetrate the darkness of this space. We would see the reflection of brass here, of glass there. We would see.

And if we used that candle to light another, the first light would not be diminished. As we lit one candle after another, we could soon fill this church with radiant brightness. And that first, original candle would not be dimmed. So it is with the light of Christ. It only spreads. Its power to penetrate great, vast darkness is unsurpassed. This is why the armor of light can enable us, by God's grace, to cast away—to seize control of and hurl far from us—the works of darkness.

Advent is not merely a time of quiet waiting. It is a time for us to remember that Christ's light once illumined the world of Bethlehem and that it burns here in the Word and Sacraments. Advent is a time to remember that we followers of Jesus are meant not only to be bearers of the light, but also to vanquish evil in this life, in our world, and in our own lives.

What works of darkness do you need to cast away?

What might it be like to put on the armor of light?

WHEN I PRAY

THE MOST REV. LORD COGGAN, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (1974-1980)

When I pray, it is not one little piper piping alone—it is one individual, joining in an orchestra. The whole Church makes up that orchestra. It has been praying at least since Abraham. It took on a new dimension when those brothers made their response by the Lake of Galilee. It gained fresh jubilation at Pentecost. Now, its members come from all over the world and the greater part of them have gone on ahead. But it is one orchestra. It goes on-and will go on till the Great Day. Then all disharmonies will fade away. Meanwhile, when I pray—even when I am coldest and most formal-I "chip in." I take my part in the great orchestra. I am one with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

THE BIRTH OF WONDER

As I grow older I get surer Man's heart is colder. His life no purer. As I grow steadily More austere I come less readily To Christmas each year. I can't keep taking Without a thought Forced merrymaking And present bought In crowds and jostling. Alas, there's naught In empty wassailing Where oblivion's sought. Oh, I'd be waiting With quiet fasting Anticipating A joy more lasting. And so I rhyme With no apology During this time Of eschatology: Judgment and warning Come like thunder. But now is the hour When I remember An infant's power On a cold December. Midnight is dawning And the birth of wonder.

"Advent can be seen as a triptych, when chronological time opens up and we can see simultaneously Christ's earthly coming to a manger in Bethlehem, His coming to each of us by faith in Word and Sacrament, and the anticipation of the future day of the Lord: His coming again in glory."

- Madeleine L'Engle

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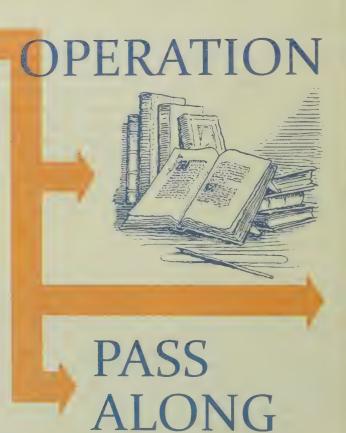
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WATCH

TADDLED FROM GRACE CHURCH, SHEBOYGAN

Happy new year! As we begin a new church year, we enter a season of expectancy. The joy of the Nativity of our Lord is not yet upon us. We wait. We watch. Advent embodies our life in this world as one of expectation.

We end the liturgical year with the celebration of the universal kingship of Jesus. At that Feast of Christ the King, our Gospel lesson spoke of judgment, of the king who has come in glory separating the sheep from the goats. Leading up to that Gospel lesson, the preceding weeks focused on judgment: on wise and foolish maidens being prepared or unprepared for the bridegroom; on the servant who had buried the talent entrusted to him by his master. And now we're in the new

year, and what does Jesus say? He speaks once more of the day of judgment, and tells us "[W]atch ... Keep awake", for we "... do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:33-37).

Watch. That's what we do in Advent. We live in the "not yetness" of the season as we live in the "not yetness" of this life, looking for our Lord, awaiting his coming; trying to live each day prepared for that hour the time of which we do not know.

How then are we to live? In the collect today we pray that by God's grace "... we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light ...," that when that last day does come we may rise to life immortal. All that we do now is preparation for that last day. So the question of how we are to live thus becomes: How do we cast away

the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light?

We get pretty clear signals in all those lessons about judgment with which the last year came to an end, lessons that tell us that faith is to be active, that we are to take risks and bear fruit. We get another signal when we combine Jesus speaking of the fig tree with his action in Matthew, when he curses the fig tree that has not borne fruit. Put these teachings together with our prayer to put on the armor of light, and it becomes clear that the armor of light is put on in how we allow God's light to shine forth in our lives by doing his will, his work.

My recollection of my own ordination is pretty much a blur, albeit one suffused with a gladsome light. But every ordination I have attended has affected me for how it embodies the putting on of the armor of light. When a

person is ordained priest in Christ's one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, he or she is literally clothed in the white alb of light. He or she is clothed also in the chasuble of a priest, in the red color of a martyr. Today, of course we wear the purple of this season of penitence. So let's combine all of these signals and symbols: signs of active ministry, of watchfulness, of light, of martyrdom, and of penitence. What do we see? We see that as we put on the armor of light, as we allow God's light to shine forth in our lives, we do this in red—sharing in the passion of our Lord—and we do this in purple: penitent, conscious of the judgment to come, when we shall see "'The Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26).

God calls us to active ministry. What we each need to ask ourselves as we watch for our Lord is "What is it that God

wants me to do?" In a priest's case the response to God has ripened into a vocation, a vocation to serve his people as a priest of his Church. In serving his people, a priestregardless of the season of the Church year—will always be clothed in red and in purple. The armor of light shines forth in red and purple, for the office of priest is a sacrificial office. It is an office and calling of compassion, of literally sharing in the sorrows of others and raising these sorrows up in the passion of our Lord. It is an office and calling of penitence, of offering before God the prayers and sacrifice of his people. But within this red and purple, within this compassion and penitence, there is always the light which shines forth, the armor put on, the white light of Easter joy and the kingship of Jesus.

What about those of us who are not in ordained ministry? Let's not focus only on those

called to a specific ministry, for we are all called to ministry. In the Catechism found in the prayer book we are taught that the Church carries out her mission "through the ministry of all ... members," and that this mission is to "restore all people to unity with God and with each other in Christ" (BCP 855). Each one of us is called to ministry. There are no spectators in God's Church. This ministry can be as simple as the lifting up of others in private prayer each day, or it can involve renouncing what we now have to travel in foreign mission. The issue is not whether we drop everything to go to seminary, or simply set aside a quiet time each day to talk to and listen to God. Whatever ministry we are called to we are, in St. Paul's words "... in every way enriched in [Jesus Christ] ... so that [we] are not lacking in any spiritual gift ..." (1Cor. 1:5-7). But we have to acknowledge this, confess it,

rejoice in it, if we are to put on the armor of light; if we are to allow God to use us in ministry.

When Jesus tells us to watch, to keep awake, he challenges each us: What will you do? How will you put on the armor of light? We can start by recognizing that the works of darkness require darkness. And what is darkness but the absence of light? The works of darkness are, therefore, interior; they thrive when we turn inward. But when we reach out, we open up, and in the open shadows cannot abide.

Light must shine forth. It is active because God not only equips each one of us for his service, he calls us to this service. Putting on the armor of light means taking the light which we have been given by God and sharing it to let it shine. There are many ways that you can do this in this

season and life of "not yetness," this season and life of watching for our Lord. There are many ways, but each will involve doing something. It might be a work of service, of working in a feeding ministry, or with youth in need of mentoring. It must include the offering of worship which you can offer on any day of the week in this church. You can put on the armor of light in education by getting involved in a study group or by teaching in a Sunday School class. The armor of light can clothe you in evangelism, modeling Christian behavior and reaching out to friends and neighbors to let them know that God may be found here. God's light shines forth in pastoral care when you visit a shut-in or one who is ill, or when you take the time to listen to the troubles of those with whom you disagree.

Take a look at the Catechism which begins on page 845 in

the prayer book, and you'll find that the mission of the Church is defined in active terms; defined as something accomplished by all Christians, clergy and lav alike. The mission of the Church is accomplished by you. God calls each of you to action. He calls some to the office and ministry of priest. When the priest lifts up his or her hands at the altar it is with Jesus that he or she reaches out to the world: reaches out to summon and to bless. Jesus summons us each to share in his passion as we share in each other's trials. Jesus summons us to share in penitence, to cast away the works of darkness and turn to the light; that with this light we may be clothed; with this light be may we armed to shine forth in a dark world. a world which waits for the coming of Christ in glory. Jesus summons. Let our hearts respond with a "yes," however this "yes" is embodied.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give thanks that you have called each of us to serve you and to serve your people in your holy Church and in the world. We give thanks that by your grace every one of us has been equipped to respond to your call, to lead others in the knowledge, love, and service of your divine majesty. We pray, Father, that following the example and call of your Son, illumined by your Spirit, we may each respond to your call to join in the ministry of your Church...Amen.

"The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a Woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab." – C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

DEATHS

THE REV. CAROLINE BAIN, 85, in Chicago, IL.

A 1983 graduate of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, she served parishes in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. She was received as an Associate of The Order of Saint Helena [Episcopal] in 1981.

THE REV. DAVID L. BARCLAY, 85, in Overland Park, KS.

A 1956 graduate of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, MA, he served parishes in West Plains, Mountain Grove, and Kansas City, MO, Anderson, IN (where he was also the first

police chaplain), San Diego, CA; Overland Park and, most recently Fort Leavenworth, KS.

THE REV. CN. DR. JOHN L. BOGART, 85, in Benicia, CA.

A 1954 graduate of the Berkeley School of Divinity at Yale University, he served at All Saints, San Diego. In the following years, he served as Rector at St. Andrew's, Encinitas; Grace Episcopal, St. Helena; Holy Trinity, Ukiah; and St. Patrick's, Kenwood, until he retired in 1991. He joined the staff of St. Paul's, Benicia, in 1991 and was active in the services and life of the church until his death. He was the Diocesan Historian as well as a Canon of the Diocese. and served as Coordinator of

Continuing Education at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

THE RT. REV. DAVID C. BOWMAN, 82, in Cleveland, OH.

A 1960 graduate of the Virginia Theological Seminary, he was ordained in December of that year. He served several parishes in Ohio before he was elected Bishop of Western New York in 1986. He retired in 1999 and moved to Shaker Heights, OH, where he served for a year as Interim Dean of Trinity Cathedral. He also served as Interim Bishop of Central New York while that diocese elected a new bishop and, in 2003, served a year as Assisting Bishop of Ohio, after which he was the interim Dean and President of Seabury Western Seminary in Evanston, IL. For the last ten years, he served actively as an Assisting Bishop in the Diocese of Ohio.

THE REV. LANE JOHN DAVENPORT, 49, in Washington, D.C.

After his baptism in 1988, he attended seminary at St. Stephen's House, a Church of England theological college, and earned his degrees at Oxford University. He received a call from Ascension and St. Agnes to serve as curate in 1993. The following year, he became priest-in-charge and rector in 1997.

THE REV. ROBERT KEATEN, 79, in Fort Collins, CO.

After a forty-year career as physicist, he was a 2001 graduate of the General Theological Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood on the Feast of the Epiphany in 2002. After serving as Associate at St. John's, Boonton, NJ, and Good Shepherd, Ringwood, NJ, in 2001 and

2002, he served as Rector of St. Andrew's, Lincoln Park, from 2002 to 2007.

THE REV. ERNEST LEE STEVENS, JR., 89, in Cheyenne, WY.

He graduated from the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1960. He served parishes in Michigan and Arizona before returning to active Army service as a Chaplain, and served in Vietnam, Korea, and Germany. After retiring from the military in 1977, he served parishes in Arizona. After moving to Cheyenne in 2007, he served at St. Mark's and St. Christopher's.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

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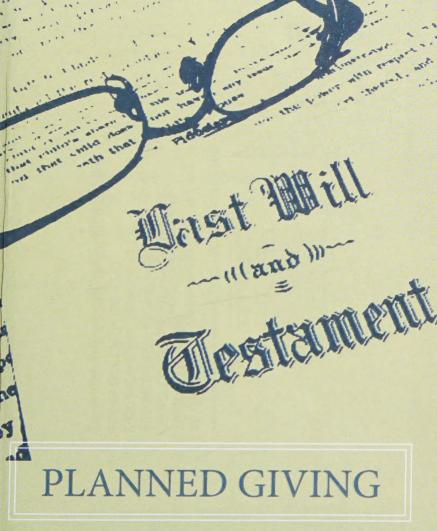
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